



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



GIBSON GIRLS TO SING AT STATE VETERANS HOME

The "Gibson Girls" from Jerseyville, IL, will be performing at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home in Hot Springs Friday, May 17 at 2:00 pm (MT). The "Veterans Honor Concert" will be held in the auditorium.



THEIR STORY

Four sisters (Alisha, Tiffany, Kabryn, and Kathryn Gibson) started singing in church when they were very young.

They have recorded three albums—"Christmas", "Every Moment", and "Vintage". To learn more about the Gibson Girls visit: <https://thegibsongirlsmusic.com/home>

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CALLING ON ALL CRAFTERS AND ARTISTS

SFVAHCS staff and veterans are invited to enter their arts and crafts during the annual Veterans & Employees Creative Arts Competition. The competition will be held on Wednesday, February 6, 2019, from 10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. on 2nd floor of primary care at the medical center.

They are asking that all art (paintings, drawings, sculpture, photography, woodcarvings, needle arts, leatherworks, paper crafts, etc. are welcome) be created within the last year and entry forms completed by Thursday, January 31.

Please call Denise at Ext. 6418 or Shirley at Ext. 6889 if you have questions or would like to enter. Everyone is invited to the artists' reception at 2:00 p.m.

NEW DIRECTOR AT SIOUX FALLS VET CENTER

Heather Bailey has been named the director of the Sioux Falls Vet Center.

Heather was born and raised in South Dakota, obtained her BS in Psychology from South Dakota State University and MSW from the University of South Dakota. She completed both an undergraduate and graduate internship with the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center and worked as a full time social worker at the VA Medical Center for four years in the Mental Health Service Line in various roles as part of the Homeless Team.

Prior to working at the VA Medical Center, Heather worked for ten years at a local non-profit agency providing therapy and other outpatient mental health services to individuals with developmental disabilities, severe mental illness, and addictions.

Heather's Father served in the U.S. Air Force during Vietnam and she has many other relatives and friends who have served or are currently serving in the U.S. Military.

She is proud to be supporting the Vet Center's mission: We are the people in VA who welcome home war veterans with honor by providing quality readjustment counseling in a caring manner. Vet Centers understand and appreciate Veterans' war experiences while assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in or near their community.

Heather's contact information is as follows: Heather.Bailey@va.gov and 605-330-4552.

VA TO IMPLEMENT APPEALS MODERNIZATION IN FEBRUARY

The U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) announced that the Federal Register will publish on Jan. 18 regulations accompanying the [Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 \(AMA\)](#), which will help veterans experience a more transparent claims decision-review process.

After publication of the regulations, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie will certify the department's readiness to implement appeals modernization, which will transform a complex appeals process into one that is simple, timely and provides greater choice to veterans who disagree with a VA decision.

Implementation will occur 30 days after the Secretary certifies, as required by law. Accordingly, the AMA will become effective Feb 19.

"The VA has been preparing for full implementation of the Appeals Modernization Act over the past 18 months," Wilkie said. "Our staff has worked diligently, particularly in the last few weeks, to ensure the new, streamlined process is available to veterans in February."

The AMA was signed into law Aug. 23, 2017. Under the act, veterans will now have three options for claims and appeals: (1) supplemental claim; (2) higher-level review; or (3) direct appeals to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. All decision reviews submitted after February 2019 will fall under the new system.

Once the Appeals Modernization Act is fully implemented, the VA's goal is to complete supplemental claims and higher-level reviews averaging 125 days. Decisions appealed to the Board under its direct docket will average 365 days. Under the legacy process, appeal resolutions averaged three to seven years. For more information about the VA appeals modernization, visit <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp> and <https://www.bva.va.gov/>.

SDPB'S MAKING A LIVING

The public is invited to *Making a Living (MAL)*, SDPB's monthly discussion of business and community development in South Dakota. This month, MAL discusses start-up opportunities and employment programs for military veterans, Tuesday, January 29, at 4:30pm, at SDPB's Sioux Falls Studios, 601 N. Phillips Avenue. The program is also webcast live on SDPB.org

Hosted by SDPB's Jackelyn Severin. Guests include:

- Jay Leichtenberg, South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation
- Erin Bultje, South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
- Kareen Dougherty, Sioux Falls Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)

Making a Living is a monthly discussion of business and community development in South Dakota. Hosted by SDPB's Jackelyn Severin, Making a Living is webcast live from SDPB's Sioux Falls Studio.

South Dakota Public Broadcasting is a statewide multi-platform network offering quality entertainment and lifelong learning via Television, Radio, Digital, and Education & Outreach. For information about SDPB and the Friends of SDPB, go to SDPB.org or call 800-456-0766.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Patient Centered Care and
Cultural Transformation

Veterans and a support person are invited to attend *Intro to Whole Health*

This course is designed to introduce you to VA's Whole Health approach to care.

- You will learn how your strengths and abilities combined with our programs and services can help you improve your health and well-being.
- Our number one goal is to help you to live your life to the fullest.

What is Whole Health?

It focuses on your values and goals regarding your health and well-being. This may include self-care and therapies such as acupuncture, massage, yoga, etc., along with your usual medical care.

- Whole Health helps support your unique answer to the question, "What would you do if your health were the best it could be?"
- Whole Health goes beyond your illnesses, injuries, or disabilities.

Date and Time: The third Saturday of each month until
April 20, 2019 from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Location: Sioux Falls Vet Center, 3200 W 49th St, Sioux
Falls, SD 57106

For questions and more information, contact:

Connie Denevan, Whole Health Coordinator, at 605-336-3230, extension 9-7736



VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Sioux Falls VA Health Care System

VA PARTNERS WITH DHS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced its partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to bolster veteran suicide prevention initiatives.

VA and DHS, the third-largest federal employer of veterans in the U.S., with veterans representing approximately 28 percent of its workforce, share the goals of improving veterans' health and well-being and increasing veterans' access to mental health services and support where needed.

The two agencies will work together to spread awareness of mental health and VA suicide prevention resources among DHS veteran employees and to explore innovative ways to enroll DHS-employed veterans in VA care. These opportunities include highlighting VA programs and resources in DHS newsletters or emails, or leveraging the nationwide network of VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators to encourage outreach to local and regional DHS offices.

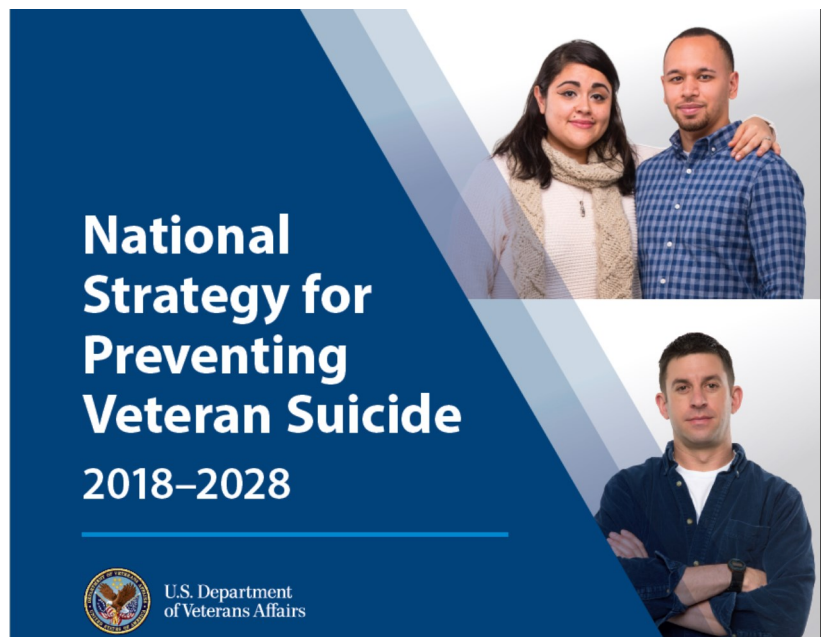
"Under President Trump's leadership, we are extremely proud to be working with DHS to prevent veteran suicide," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Our two agencies are committed to ensuring that veterans receive the care they need, and this landmark partnership will allow us to leverage the strengths of both organizations to reach more veterans and save more lives."

The partnership, which was launched in November, will allow VA to reach more veterans outside VA care — before they reach a crisis point — and form a vital part of VA's [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#).

This is not the first time VA and DHS have joined forces to prevent veteran suicide. The two agencies have been working together with the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) through President Trump's [Executive Order](#) to improve mental health resources for veterans transitioning from active duty to civilian life. [Research](#) has shown that service members transitioning to veteran status are at increased risk for suicide. To combat this risk, DoD, VA and DHS are working to ensure that new veterans receive access to VA mental health care and other services from the moment they transition from the military.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a veteran in crisis, can call the Veteran and Military Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day at 800-273-8255, and press 1; send a text message to 838255; or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#).

Reporters covering veteran mental health issues are strongly encouraged to visit [www.ReportingOnSuicide.org](#) for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.



Free Drop-In Legal Clinic



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA



State Bar of *South Dakota*

JOIN US ON:

- **February 21, 2019** from **9am-3pm** at the **American Legion Codington Post 17** located at 1412 9th Ave SW (HWY 212), Watertown, SD 57201.
- **February 22, 2019** from **9am-3pm** at the **Sioux Falls DAV** located at 1519 W 51st St, Sioux Falls, SD 57105. *Shuttles will be providing transportation from the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center to the DAV.*

Join the Veterans Legal Education Group and the South Dakota Low Income Taxpayer Clinic for a FREE LEGAL CLINIC. Legal professionals, along with student attorneys, will be on site to address and support the Military community with any of their legal questions and needs.

FREE FOR ALL SERVICE MEMBERS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND VETERANS!

EVENT CONTACT:

Austin Schaefer
VLEG President
(605) 380-0812
Austin.Schaefer@coyotes.usd.edu

SUPPORTED BY:

South Dakota Young Lawyers Section, University of
South Dakota School of Law, the South Dakota
State Bar, Military OneSource, and the South
Dakota Veterans Affairs

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan 28-29—VFW State Legislative Conference—Pierre
Jan 31—Veterans Town Hall—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls (1519 W. 51st Street) 6:00 pm (CT)
Jan 31—Deadline for entry forms to be submitted for the SFVAHCS Creative Arts Competition
Feb 2—USS South Dakota Commissioning—Groton, CT
Feb 6—American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8—Pierre—5:00 to 8:00 pm (CT)
Feb 6—SFVAHCS Creative Arts Competition—2nd Floor of the Primary Care Facility—10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
Feb 8-10—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Holiday Inn—Spearfish
Feb 12—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Ft Meade Building 145—Room 239—1:00 pm—3:00 pm (MT)
Feb 18—State Offices Closed—President's Day
Feb 21—Drop In Legal Services—American Legion Post 17 (1412 9th Ave SW—Watertown (9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
Feb 22—Drop in Legal Services—DAV (1519 W. 51st Street)—Sioux Falls (9:00 am—3:00 pm) (CT)
Feb 26—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs Building 12—Room A002—10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)
Mar 3-7—VFW Legislative Conference—Washington, DC
Mar 8—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273 (420 Main Street—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Mar 12—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Ft Meade Building 145—Room 239—1:00 pm—3:00 pm (MT)
Mar 26—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs Building 12—Room A002—10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)
May 7-9 SDDVA Mini Conferences (Rapid City, Pierre and Sioux Falls)
May 14—Bill Casper's Annual WW II Luncheon—TREA—Rapid City
May 17—Veterans Honor Concert—State Veterans Home—Hot Springs—2:00 pm (MT)
May 17-19—DAV Convention—Hilton Garden Inn (5300 S. Grand Circle) —Sioux Falls
July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL
Aug 26-29—SDDVA Benefit School



Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>
Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

